Uncle Lavern narrating

QUIT CLAIM DEED
CATTLE RUSTLING
and
A TRAGEDY

In the fall of 1872, Father bought a Quit Claim Deed for the meadows in Lost Canyon from a man named Dehart. At that time no government land had been surveyed and the settlers had squatters rights. To convey property they simply gave a Quit Claim Deed, and the purchaser moved on to the property. In the spring of 1873, Father moved the family there, where we lived in a log cabin. Father had a herd of 60 head of cattle to graze on the meadows and milked about a dozen cows, where he put butter down in firkins until sold. I was an infant at the time. My brother Owen was two years old and sister Minnie four years old. Lost Canyon was 7000feet in elevation and to approach it one had to go from Antelope Valley, up a twisting canyon to Little Antelope Valley, then a steep grade to Lost Canyon. It was 10 or twelve miles from Coleville where there was a Post Office and a small store. The family had been there only a few months when three horsemen arrived namely R.G.Watkins, Dan Barnett and Frank Cravens. Watkins was a Constable and he served notice on Father to vacate as Barnett had a Quit Claim to the property. It developed that Dehart had signed a Quit Claim Deed to both Barnett and Father on the same day and had received money from both and then left the country. There was a great deal of wrangling and threats to get Father to vacate. They had planned to get the family out and Craven was to take possession and hold the claim for Barnett. Craven strutted around waving a six-shooter and telling Father if he knew what was best for him he should leave. Father never moved. He knew that possession was 9 points of the law. Craven, a desperate character from Texas and was said to be an outlaw spent most of his time riding for Tom Rickey. Tom Rickey had a large herd of cattle

in the north end of Antelope Valley. Rickey made regular drives of small bunches of beef cattle to Virginia City. Nevada, at that time a booming town. Rickey was said on those occasions to have picked up on the range more of other people's cattle than his own. Father had been in the habit of going to Coleville every other Tuesday of each week and get what mail there was. The mail came by stage on Tuesday of each week but Father got his orders to Vacate, and he never dared leave the canyon. Mother was handi-capped with us children. However mother suceeded in getting a letter to the Post office. She had written to her brother Frank Owens who lived in Washo Valley, Nevada, to come at once as they needed assistance for awhile. A day or so later Father missed two fat yearlings steers. He felt sure someone (Cravens) had driven them away. Sometime later Frank Owens arrived on a Sorrel horse. Father gave him a description of the two missing steers with the markings branded with a T on the left hip and a swallow-fork on the right ear. Riding to Coleville making inquiries about the strayed steers, he met a rancher by the name of Lobdell who had quite a herd of cattle. Lobdell said he too was missing a fine fat cow. They learned that Rickey was gathering and working with cattle. It being late in the afternoon, Lobdell suggested that Frank Owens stay overnight with him and they would look for the cattle the next day in the lower end of the valley. After riding for some time among Rickey's scattered herds, they were approached by Rickey and his two men, Craven and Snider. None had seen any stray cattle but they persisted in following them through their search. Cravens at once became very abusive to Owens and among other things called him a "dirty little coyote." Finally riding behind Owens he threw a reata around Owen's horse. Owens wheeled his horse and shot Cravens in the leg, a minor scratch. Cravens swore vengeance, and being without a gun, he called on Snider

for his. Lobdell warned Snider, but Cravens swore he would kill Owens the next time they met. To shorten the story all of the cattle were found. Owens again stayed over night with Lobdell and proceeded the next day to Lost Canyon.

Several weeks later, Owens was riding to Coleville to get the mail. Sheldon Frost, who was living along the road at the mouth of the canyon leading to Little Antelope told me the following story; "I was working in the garden, when Frank Cravens came along riding a black horse. He stopped and at once became very talkative. Said he had a debt to pay and was going to Lost Canyon and shoot it out with a "dirty little coyote." He had been gone a few minutes when I heard a shot. I thought to myself that Cravens had gotten Owens. Soon a black horse came running down the road ~~the road~~ and I knew that Owens was the quickest draw at the sharp curve in the road where they met. "

Cravens soon passed away. There was not as much as an inquest. Everyone knew it was a case of self defense. Soon after this Father paid Barnett a small amount of money and both he and Watkins became fast friends. Some years later the Lost Canyon Ranch was sold to Cochrane.